



CHASING MEANING

A Study in Ecclesiastes: Part II

Small Group Curriculum

Curriculum Guide

The Goal

Park Community Church's small groups are built upon three pillars: gather, transformation, and impact. Using these three fundamental pillars, we anticipate the Holy Spirit to mold everyone in our small groups into the likeness of Christ as we push back the darkness in our city. Much of this work comes from knowing God personally, correctly, and intimately. Our hope is that the small group curriculum will facilitate a deeper understanding of God through his revealed Word in a way that transforms our lives together and moves us into Christ-like action.

Context Questions

Context is key when it comes to interpreting the Bible. Each week, we hope that you will take a few minutes to remind one another of where you are at in Ecclesiastes. Don't feel bound to the suggested questions, but feel free to let the conversation flow naturally. Especially as we study the Old Testament, it is important to understand the context in which the scripture is written.

Textual Questions

As a group, you will observe the text and look for the details. What you are looking for in this section is simply what the *text* is saying. Do not feel the need to jump into application, that time will come. This section will help build a textual framework for the reflection questions that follow.

Reflection Questions

This section is designed to help your group move from hearing and understanding the Word to letting it shape your life. Each week you'll reflect together on questions that invite vulnerability, personal sharing, and accountability. Use this time to consider how the lesson applies to your daily life, whether through a new way of thinking, a fresh heart posture, repentance, celebration, or a conviction to live differently. The goal is that faith would be stirred in both belief and practice, encouraging one another toward growth in Christ.

Week Seven

Can money make us happy? | Ecclesiastes 5:1-6:9

Textual Questions

Before using the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. What instructions does the Teacher give throughout this passage? Where does this advice still apply to the world today?
2. What relationship between possessions and enjoyment does the Teacher describe?
3. Where do these themes appear elsewhere in Scripture?
4. In verses 18–20, how does the Teacher's conclusion about eating, drinking, and enjoying one's work differ from how he described the pursuit of wealth earlier in the chapter? What does he identify as the source of this enjoyment?
5. In 6:7–9, what does the Teacher say about human appetite and desire? How does verse 9 contrast with the endless pursuit described in verse 7?
6. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. In Ecclesiastes 5:1–7, the Teacher warns against approaching God carelessly, emphasizing that we should be “quick to hear” and slow to speak.
 - a. What does it look like to come before God ready to listen rather than simply ready to speak?
 - b. Are there areas of your relationship with God where you talk more than listen?
 - c. What does listening to God actually look like in your prayers and life with God?

2. Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money." The Teacher exposes the inability of wealth to provide lasting satisfaction.

- a. What are some ways our culture teaches us that having more money, possessions, or financial security will make us happier? To what extent are they right? To what extent are they wrong?
 - b. Where are you most tempted to believe that having "more" will finally satisfy you?
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3. The Teacher describes someone who has accumulated wealth and possessions but cannot enjoy them (6:1–6). The problem is not simply what the person has, but their inability to enjoy it.

- a. What is the difference between possessing something and actually receiving it as a gift from God to enjoy?
 - b. Are there good things in your life that you have become so focused on achieving, protecting, or increasing that you have stopped enjoying them?
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4. Throughout Ecclesiastes, the Teacher questions if what we accumulate and accomplish can give lasting significance to those who seek it. He notes how wealth and honor may distinguish a person from others, but they cannot overcome the limitations shared by every human.

- a. How much of what you pursue is motivated by a desire to be noticed, respected, or admired by others?
 - b. For Christians, can recognition be something good to pursue, or does the pursuit become purely seeking identity in the approval of others?
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Week Eight

Can limits bring us Peace? | Ecclesiastes 6:10-7:22

Textual Questions

Before using the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. Ecclesiastes 7 begins with a series of statements about what is “better.” What do you notice about the things the Teacher calls out in verses 1–6? What do they have in common?
2. In verses 11–14, how does the Teacher describe wisdom and its relationship to prosperity, adversity, and God’s work? What can wisdom accomplish and what remains outside human control?
3. In verses 15–18, the Teacher describes two extremes: being “overly righteous” and “overly wicked.” What does the surrounding context suggest he is warning against?
4. Throughout 6:10–7:22, the Teacher repeatedly confronts humanity’s desire to understand or control. What different examples of these do you see across the passage?
5. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. Ecclesiastes 6:10–12 reminds us that we are creatures, not God. We cannot know everything, control everything, or determine what will happen after us. These limits remind us that we were never meant to live independently of God or others.
 - a. How does culture view human limitations?
 - b. What limits in your life do you see as inconveniences, weaknesses, or problems rather than as part of what it means to be human?
 - c. How do your limits push you into deeper dependence on God?

- d. What does the desire to overcome or hide our limitations reveal about us and how we relate to God?

2. In Ecclesiastes 7:2-4, it says the house of mourning can be better than the house of feasting because sorrow forces us to “lay it to heart.” The Teacher presents suffering and mortality not simply as things to avoid, but as experiences that can produce wisdom.

- a. Why do you think we naturally try to avoid thinking about death and suffering?
- b. Can you think of a season of suffering that changed the way you viewed yourself, what really matters, or God?
- c. Is there a difficulty in your life that you are avoiding rather than allowing God to use it to shape you?

3. Within Ecclesiastes 7:8–10, the text contrasts patience with pride and warns against longing for “former days.” The Teacher challenges our tendency to assume that what came before was better simply because it is familiar and comfortable.

- a. What is nostalgia good for? How can it also reveal dissatisfaction with the life God has given you in the present? How have you experienced this?
- b. What would it look like for you to faithfully embrace the season of life God has placed you in right now?

4. Ecclesiastes 7:21–22 warns not to take every word others say to heart. It also reminds us that we have said things about others that we would not want repeated. The Teacher

exposes how easily we can become consumed by what other people think and say about us.

- a. How much do other people's opinions or criticisms influence your sense of worth?
- b. How can you tell if you are putting too much weight on others' opinions?
- c. How do you practically work at establishing your identity more securely in what God says versus what other people say?

Week Nine

Does authority stifle wisdom and freedom? | Ecclesiastes 7:23-8:17

Textual Questions

Before using the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. Consider Solomon and his wisdom. How did he acquire it, and what role did it play in his story?
2. Verses 23-25 compare with the teacher's earlier pursuit of wisdom in Ecclesiastes 1-2? What does he seem to have learned about the limits of wisdom?
3. What does the Teacher say wisdom does for a person in verse 8:1?
4. Read 8:10-13. What apparent contradiction does the Teacher observe between the wicked receiving honor and the righteous suffering? How does the Teacher distinguish the fate of the wicked from that of those who fear God?
5. In verses 16-17, the Teacher returns to the question of understanding. What does he discover when he tries to understand all that God has done? What repeated language in these verses emphasizes the limits of human wisdom?
6. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. Ecclesiastes 7:23–25 describes the Teacher's attempt to understand wisdom, only to discover that it remains beyond his reach. Rather than presenting wisdom as something that can eventually explain everything, the Teacher is confronted with the limits of what he can know.
 - a. Where do you find yourself wanting answers or explanations that God has not given you?

- b. When you don't understand something, how do you typically respond?
- c. Is there a time in your life when you were proud of the way you handled not knowing something?

2. After searching for wisdom and finding it "far off," the Teacher states one conclusion with confidence: "See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes" (7:29). The problem is not only that the world is beyond our understanding. It is also that the human heart is endlessly inventive in turning away from God.

- a. Why do you think this is the one thing the Teacher feels sure of after all his searching?
- b. What "schemes" do people use today to find life, freedom, or meaning apart from God? Where do you notice your own heart seeking out similar things?
- c. How does the gospel answer the problem of verse 7:29 in a way that human wisdom cannot?

3. When authority becomes frustrating, our instinct is often to walk away from the job, the church, or the relationship. However, verse 8:3 says, "Be not hasty to go from his presence."

- a. How do you discern between a situation you should leave and one God is asking you to endure? Is there a situation in your life currently that comes to mind?
- b. What does patience under imperfect authority produce in you that leaving quickly would not?

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4. "The wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. For there is a time and a way for everything" (8:5–6). Wisdom isn't only knowing what is right. It's also knowing when and how to act on it.
- a. Think of a time you said or did the right thing at the wrong time. What happened?
 - b. Is there a situation right now where you need to speak up or act? What would the "proper time and just way" look like?
 - c. How can prayer and counsel from others help you discern timing rather than acting on impulse?

Week Ten

How can life matter if we die? | Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

Textual Questions

Before using the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. What contrasts do you notice between the living and the dead in verses 4-6? What does the Teacher say the living has that the dead no longer have?
2. Read verses 7-9. What examples does the Teacher give for how we should live? What do these ordinary gifts have in common? How do verses 7-9 fit with the rest of the passage?
3. Ecclesiastes repeatedly challenges the idea that hard work, wisdom, or skill will automatically lead to success. Where do you see that idea challenged in verses 10-12? What does the Teacher say about human ability, effort, and control?
4. Verse 12 compares people to fish caught in a net and birds caught in a snare. What does this imagery reveal about our ability to control what happens to us? How does this connect with the Teacher's statement in verse 1 that we do not know what awaits us?
5. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. Verse 1 says that "the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God," yet the Teacher immediately acknowledges that we cannot know what lies ahead.
 - a. What does it mean to have your life "in the hand of God" while still being unable to know what He will do or what will happen? Where does human free will and responsibility play into this?
 - b. Last week we discussed control (reflection question #1). In the past week, have you experienced this more? What have you learned about yourself and God?

2. Ecclesiastes emphasizes the universal reality of death. Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-26.
 - a. Ecclesiastes reminds us that death is a reality we cannot escape. How does the resurrection of Jesus affirm, deepen, or transform the hope we see (or do not yet see) within Ecclesiastes 9? How does this change the way you think about this reality?
 - b. If death is not ultimately the end for those who are in Christ, how does that change the way you understand the Teacher's invitation to enjoy the life God has given you now?

3. Verses 7-9 move from the reality of death to enjoying the work of your hands. Consider now that Jesus entered into ordinary human life - eating, drinking, working, resting, celebrating, and suffering.
 - a. Why do you think the Teacher responds to the reality of death by calling us to receive and enjoy the ordinary gifts of life?
 - b. How does Jesus' participation in ordinary human life deepen or reshape the way you think about these gifts?
 - c. Ecclesiastes repeatedly describes life as "vanity", yet it also calls us to enjoy it. How can something be temporary and still be worth receiving with gratitude?
 - d. How is this vision of living and enjoying life in the present different from the cultural phrase YOLO (You Only Live Once)?

4. Read and compare verse 10 with verse 11.
 - a. What does verse 10 call us to and what does verse 11 remind us?

- b. How can we faithfully give ourselves to our work, relationships, and responsibilities without believing that our effort guarantees a particular outcome?
- c. Verse 10 calls us to do whatever is before us "with your might." Is there an area of your life you could approach with greater might?

Week Eleven

Can we be wise in a foolish world? | Ecclesiastes 9:13-11:10

Textual Questions

Before using the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. How many times does the Teacher acknowledge something outside human control or knowledge in this passage? What examples can you find?
2. Read 9:13-18. What happens in the story of the poor wise man and the great city?
3. What are characteristics of the wise and foolish according to the Teacher (consider other chapters in Ecclesiastes)?
4. In 10:16-20, what observations does the Teacher make about rulers, feasting, work, and money?
5. What does 11:7-10 clarify about the Teacher's earlier observations concerning the uncertainty and limitations of life?
6. What would we be missing if this text were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. Ecclesiastes shows us that human wisdom is valuable but limited. The poor wise man brings salvation to a city but receives little recognition.
 - a. If wisdom is so valuable, why does the Teacher spend time emphasizing its limitations? What does this passage suggest wisdom can accomplish?
 - b. What does this passage reveal about living wisely in a world where outcomes are often unpredictable and seemingly unjust?
 - c. How does this passage help us think about Jesus and the nature of true wisdom?

2. Ecclesiastes 10 contrasts wisdom and foolishness, showing how seemingly small acts of foolishness can have significant consequences.
- a. Why do you think the Teacher emphasizes that foolishness can become visible even when a person is simply “walking along the road”? What does this suggest about how character eventually reveals itself?
 - b. Where are you most tempted toward the patterns described in this chapter: reacting quickly, speaking too much, failing to prepare, laziness, trying to control outcomes, or something else?

3. There is a repeated tension throughout chapter 11. We are called to act, work, give, and enjoy, while simultaneously being reminded that we do not know life's outcomes.
- a. Have you ever found yourself waiting for “perfect conditions” or the “full picture” before taking action?
 - b. Why do you think Ecclesiastes holds these together rather than resolving the tension?
 - c. How might the Gospel reinforce the Teacher's call to live faithfully amid uncertainty?

Week Twelve

What really matters? | Ecclesiastes 12

Textual Questions

Before using the questions, have the group simply observe the text. Listen to what they discover as the Holy Spirit leads them. You may naturally cover some of the questions provided below in that discussion.

1. In verses 2-5, the Teacher describes a house and its inhabitants using a series of images. What words and images are repeated or connected throughout these verses? What do you think each image is describing?
2. What contrast do you see between Genesis 2:7 and Ecclesiastes 12:7? How does Ecclesiastes describe the relationship between the body, the dust, and the spirit?
3. Why do you think the Teacher spends time describing death in verses 1-7 before giving his final conclusion in verses 13-14?
4. What does the description of mortality contribute to his command to fear God?
5. Compare the beginning of Ecclesiastes with the end. What has the Teacher added to our understanding of life across this book?
6. What would we be missing if this book were not included in the Bible?

Reflection Questions

1. In verses 1-7, Ecclesiastes describes the reality of aging and death, calling us to ultimately “remember your Creator in the days of your youth” (v. 1), before the difficulties of old age come.
 - a. What images or phrases stand out to you? What do you think they communicate about the experience of growing old and approaching death?
 - b. What are some of the ways we try to resist, hide, or deny the reality of aging?
 - c. What might it look like to receive aging and dependence as part of faithfully living before God?

- d. How might our view of death and aging change if we saw it not as a loss, but as a reminder that we were created to be fully dependent on Him? What would it look like to embrace the goodness of our weakness and limitations?

2. The conclusion of this book can be summarized in verses 13-14, "Fear God and keep his commandments."

- a. What does it mean to fear God rightly?
b. How would you describe the fear of God to a skeptical friend?
c. Why do you think the Teacher's conclusion is so simple? How does "fear God" answer the problem of meaninglessness Ecclesiastes has explored?

3. The book has spent twelve chapters exploring work, pleasure, wisdom, wealth, relationships, injustice, death, and human limits.

- a. Consider our time in Ecclesiastes. What did you learn in this series? How did it challenge you? Please list the major themes and your takeaways.
